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ABSTRACT

EIGHT ITEMS (PHONOGRAPH RECORDS AND TAPE RECORDINGS) USEFUL FOR INSTRUCTION IN LISTENING ARE DESCRIBED AND EVALUATED. INFORMATION PROVIDED ON EACH ITEM INCLUDES SOURCE, GRADE LEVEL, APPROXIMATE COST, PUBLISHER'S DESCRIPTION, CONTENT SUMMARY, AND AN EVALUATION OF THE MATERIAL. TITLES OF MATERIALS REVIEWED ARE "MEET MR. MIX-UP," "LET'S LISTEN" (PRIMARY), "LISTENING SKILLS FOR PRE-READERS," "LET'S LISTEN" (ELEMENTARY), "EAR TRAINING FOR MIDDLE GRADES," "LISTEN AND THINK PROGRAM," "HOW TO STUDY AND WHY," AND "EFFECTIVE LISTENING." (LH)

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A Critical Bibliography of Listening Materials

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Editor's Note:

The provision of instruction in listening is an area in which many teachers at all levels are vitally interested. Audio materials for this purpose are scarce. However, a small number of audio tapes and records designed for listening instruction have become available over the past few years, and this number is increasing.

Doris Deugau, a teacher at Dr. E.W. Coffin Elementary School in Calgary, has examined and critically evaluated several of these records and tapes in terms of their instructional usefulness. We feel that her reactions as an experienced teacher who has, incidentally, developed her own short taped phonics program in vowel sounds to meet the specific needs of her pupils, will be of value to teachers who wish to use commercially prepared audio tapes or records for listening instruction as well as for ideas toward preparing their own instructional materials in listening.

MEET MR. MIX-UP

Educational Activities, Inc., Box 392, Freeport, New York, 11520.

Level: Pre-primary, primary grades, or special education.

Price: Approximately $8.00

According to Publishers:

This is a teaching aid designed to develop and improve listening for comprehension, evaluation, retention, instruction, vocabulary building and enrichment, appreciation, and as a social activity. A set of picture cards for use with the records is included. On each band on the record, Mr. Mix-up invites the children to play a game which he calls a "silly mix-up". The children must identify the mix-up and follow the instruction given.

Content:

The record consists of three 20-30 minute lessons, presented in order of difficulty. Their purpose is listening training in *comprehension, evaluation, and retention.* The child learns to listen for contradictions *(critical listening),* listen to remember *details* and *sequence.* He listens for *instructions* and learns to follow them. He listens to a variety of words in interesting and stimulating situations, thus *enriching his vocabulary. Appreciation* of imaginative material is fostered. Active responses are solicited, providing a means of *encouraging the child to attend.*

The format is that of a series of musical jingles in which the same tune is repeated throughout, with fresh verbal content in each repetition. The teacher's guide suggests using only one lesson at a time and spacing them about a week apart. This seems like a necessary caution because the tune, interesting and lively as it is, could easily become monotonous if repeated too frequently or for too long at a time.

Besides the record, a set of pictures is included, so that the children can be keyed into the listening discriminations through visual experiences. An excellent teacher's guide gives suggestions for pre-listening discussions in which the children are encouraged to express themselves well and listen attentively to others.

Evaluation:

This is an *excellent* record for the kindergarten and primary levels and for children with special problems. The teacher's guide suggests the use of the record with children with learning disabilities, the mentally retarded, the emotionally disturbed and the physical handicapped, as well as with normal children in the primary grades. I believe that it is an excellent program for any of these. The sparkling nature of both ideas and tune, as well

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as the voice of the narrator and the play-nature of the content, make it something the children would look forward to as a special treat.

One advantage of the approach used in this record is that the teacher receives feedback through the child's reactions. The humor is unmistakable to the child who comprehends what he is hearing. Thus the child's *enjoyment* is the teacher's cue that he understands.

LET'S LISTEN M. Bresnahan & W.L. Pronovost.

Ginn and Company, 30 Mobile Drive, Toronto 16, Ontario

Level: Pre-primary, and primary grades.

Price: Approximately $9.00 for album of three records.

According to the Publishers:

This is an album of three records which provide auditory training for reading readiness and speech development. The records are planned especially for use with the readiness books, pre-primers, primers and first readers of the *Ginn Basic Readers.*

Content:

This set of records contains 16 lessons for training in auditory discrimination of speech sounds. The child listens for similarities and differences, listens for various purposes to develop a variety of listening skills, and learns to articulate clearly and express himself with ease.

The lessons include listening for details, listening for similarities and differences in speech sounds, saying words after the speaker, singing, playing games and doing finger plays. Feedback for the child is provided where responses are called for.

Initial consonants treated are: *b, m, t, l, r,* and s, *Final consonants b, m, t,* the digraph *sh,* initial blends *st, tr,* and rhyming endings are also covered.

Two summary lessons provide a test for discrimination skills covered in the lessons and also a test of transfer to sounds not taught.

Evaluation:

This is an excellent set of records including a most helpful teacher's guide. The voice of the narrator is interesting and warm, providing motivation for the young listener. The activities include adequate variety and therefore will continue to stimulate the child as well as provide repetition without boredom. Along with the listening and articulation skills there is scope for social training in the games taught. Good speech patterns are presented, and practice in these is provided.

I can see an important use for these records in readiness training and as an accompaniment to early phonics training in the reading program. Another important use is in remedial work with children having reading difficulties in the primary grades.

In my last grade two class I had a group of five children whose reading level was very low. They had not developed any way of attacking new words, although their classmates had. This suggested that they had missed the readiness skills that the others had learned, either through immaturity or through failure of the teacher to begin at their level (probably these amount to the same thing). They required a great deal of help in speech and listening (more than I had time to give individually in a large class). These records would be means of providing such children with the extra help they need.

The records lend themselves to a variety of uses and thus are valuable fore either class work or group work. A group like the one mentioned above can work independently using earphones after an initial orientation to the records.

The value of this kind of training at the grade one level is in preventing difficulties in reading later on. The lessons, along with the follow-up activities suggested in the teacher's guide, provide a very complete pre-reading training in the area of auditory discrimination skills. They are useful for the inexperienced teacher as well as the experienced.

LISTENING SKILLS FOR PRE-READERS (Volumes I–V)

Kimbo Educational Records. P.O. Box 55, Deal, New Jersey, 07723

Level: Pre-primary and primary grades.

Price: Approximately $5.00 per volume

According to the Publishers:

Each volume in this series is concerned with promoting facility in aural comprehension skills (listening, responding, and making judgements on the basis of listening cues) through games and exercises.

Editor's Note:

Only volumes One and Two are evaluated here. However, it is safe to suggest that the evaluation is appropriate for the remaining volumes as well.

Content – Volume I

Skills of listening and vocabulary building are presented in this record, which is designed to improve aural comprehension skills as an aid to preparing the child for reading. The child is asked to listen, respond and make judgements on the basis of given cues. Immediate feedback makes the exercises self correcting. The areas covered are:

1. Different ways in which children use words and hear them.
2. Use of words to name things and people.
3. Use of words for fun, humor, rhymes, games, etc. (Appreciation).
4. Use of words to ask for things we need. (Listening for main idea).
5. Use of words to get help. (Making judgements; understanding one's own relationship to community resources).
6. Use of words in games. (Following instructions).
7. Use of words to teach us. (Listening for information, details, main idea, relationships, generalizing, etc.)
8. Use of words to understand and describe people and things. (Enrichment through flexibility of vocabulary).
9. Use of words to tell how we feel. (Listening to appreciate mood, humor, character, rhythms of speech, style).
10. Use of special words for special situations such as medicine, law, mathematics, science, etc. (Listening for special meanings of words in particular context).

Evaluation – Volume I:

The material presented is valuable but needs pre-listening by the teacher in order to pick out parts that would be useful with a particular instructional group. It is rather like one would expect school instruction to be - - no surprises and all down to business: no nonsense. However, it is designed for kindergarten and primary levels and may seem fresh and fun to this age group. Some jokes are presented which would appeal to little children. When a response is called for there is a pause for the child to answer. The correct response is then given. This is good because it is a self-correcting kind of exercise and could be handled by a child or a group with earphones or in another room. However, I noticed one possible difficulty for the young listener in regard to the pauses. Often, the response following the pause could mistakenly be taken for part of the next statement, especially by the child who may have tuned out momentarily during the

response pause. The effect of this could be very confusing. Children who tend to be easily confused should be guided through the activities by the teacher. The program should be used in small doses and followed by enjoyable activities arising out of the material presented. The suggestions given for follow-up activities are good from the standpoint of content to be covered. The creative teacher could transform them into activities which would stimulate her own class.

Content – Volume II:

Exercises and games are presented for the purpose of promoting listening acuity, motor responses to aural stimuli, and thinking and responding categorically. Each lesson deals with a specific category such as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, communication. The lessons become increasingly difficult. The child is asked to listen, select information, respond, identify elements comprising category, and screen out irrelevant elements. Later he is asked to sub-categorize. The use of poems, rhymes, riddles and stories add interest to the formation of concepts and the building of vocabulary associated with the categories covered. The teacher's guide gives good suggestions for follow-up activities.

Evaluation – Volume II:

All the things mentioned in connection with Volume I of this series apply. Although the records are unexciting, they contain valuable ideas. One advantage in using them, after first pre-listening, is that the teacher is reminded of instructional skills she may be neglecting, and can then follow up with interesting activities of her own. Sometimes a change from the teacher's voice is also valuable to a class. However, I did feel that the voices used in this series of records seemed overly precise. The idea of presenting good articulation is fine but these voices seemed to be too unnatural. Perhaps the young child will not notice this, however, and will at least be made conscious of good articulation. However, a particularly mature group from good linguistic backgrounds may notice the unnatural articulation and may not appreciate it. The teacher needs to notice how her class reacts.

LET'S LISTEN
Kimbo Educational Records.
P.O. Box 55, Deal, New Jersey 007723
Level: Elementary grades.

Price: Approximately $5.00

According to the Publishers:

This record precedes and serves as an introduction to the record *Ear Training for Middle Grades.* It is designed to introduce children to planned and directed listening, with suggestions of games and activities which should be part of the basic listening instruction program.

Content:

The child is directed toward listening to sounds in terms of varying pitch, timbre, and dynamics. The record provides games and activities which help the child to discriminate sounds by criteria other than loudness alone. Differences between organized sound (music) and unorganized sound (noise) are taught. A "Silent Classroom" game trains the child to listen for sounds which are often not heard because of other sounds. Other games involving quiet sounds are also given. Imitating is used in some of the activities.

Evaluation:

As an aid to reading instruction, this record would be of value inasmuch as anything which stimulates the child to listen for similarities and differences in sounds leads the child to hear the differences in spoken sounds. However, this record is really directed to students of music and, although elementary in

many of its aspects, contains some very difficult kinds of listening. The imitations required in many instances might be outside the ability of the primary child. For this reason, it might prove more useful to the teacher of the older child whose reading difficulties stem from listening problems.

EAR TRAINING FOR MIDDLE GRADES

Kimbo Educational Records. P.O. Box 55, Deal, New Jersey. 07723.

Level: Intermediate Grades.

Price: Approximately $5.00.

According to the Publisher:

This record introduces pupils to sounds and correct listening and develops sensitivity to sound. It suggests and includes games and activities to enrich children's listening habits.

Content:

The record begins with a cacophony of sounds followed by a lecture-type introduction explaining what sound is and what elements make sounds different. Differences between hearing and listening are discussed. The notion of sounds being classified in our minds in groups according to particular locations is discussed. This is followed by a pencil and paper game in which the child listens to a group of sounds and guesses the location. Musical sounds are differentiated from unmusical ones; loud sounds from soft ones; high pitched ones from low pitched ones. Varieties of timbres are differentiated and the changes in the human voice when emotion is involved suggest control of voice in certain situations. Sounds of inanimate objects and of animals are compared with human voice sounds, and the child is asked to imitate these sounds with his voice. All of these concepts are explained and illustrated with games and activities.

Evaluation:

The games are interesting but often based on the narrator's own interpretation of sounds. In games where the child has to imitate with his own voice a sound made by an inanimate object, there were numerous instances where I could not agree with the pitch the narrator chose as correct. These sounds often contain a variety of pitches and I believe people hear different things in them. The feedback therefore was negatively reinforcing and I felt angry. After this reaction, of course, I found it difficult to accept the narrator's statements. In games requiring the child to guess what was making a particular sound, the response could have been a number of things but the narrator each time indicated only his own choice, leaving us listeners feeling rebuked. For example, the correct response for one sound was given as: "a stick hitting a garbage can lid". Why could it not have been "a canoe paddle hitting a water bucket"? One example might be excusable, but this record is full of them.

I would suggest that, although the skills being taught are worth teaching, the narrator's technique leaves much to be desired. If the record is to be used with a class, however, the teacher should pre-listen to it and be prepared to discuss alternative responses. This could make for very interesting and informative listening training.

LISTEN AND THINK PROGRAM

Educational Development Laboratories, Huntington, New York.

Level: Elementary, junior high grades

Price: Approximately $120 per series; $.95 per lesson book.

According to the Publisher:

This program consists of a series of 15 tape recorded lessons and integrated pupil workbooks currently available at each of grade

levels 3-8 (additional levels planned), designed to improve listening comprehension and develop skills necessary to good thinking. Each taped lesson includes speeded listening (compressed speech). Teachers' Guides are available for each series.

Content:

The program is designed to improve listening comprehension and to develop specific thinking skills. Series E, evaluated in this paper, is designed for average to high average readers at the grade five level and covers the following skills:

1. Listening (general orientation)
2. Identifying main ideas
3. Recognizing sequence
4. Outlining
5. Classifying
6. Recognizing cause and effect
7. Predicting outcomes
8. Using our senses
9. Understanding character
10. Understanding setting
11. Sharing feelings
12. Enjoying humor
13. Recognizing speaker's purpose
14. Distinguishing between fact and opinion
15. Drawing conclusions.

The tapes provide instruction and stories, and an integrated pupil lesson book provides exercises which apply the skills being taught. Each lesson consists of two parts: skill introduction and application, and speeded listening, comprehension questions for both parts are included in the lesson books. The questions are grouped in small units with three or four to a unit. Answers are given for each unit before going on to the next one. The tape and the lesson book clearly state when to stop and start the tape recorder. A teacher's guide book gives suggestions for follow up activities in art, social studies, and science. The lesson book includes diagnostic and progress charts for the student's use.

Evaluation:

The tapes are well planned and adequately cover the general field of listening and thinking for presentation through the language arts. I believe the format, in which the child listens for short periods and reacts for short periods, changing from tape to book and back again, keeps the child alert. The speeded listening should add to this effect. There is no attempt made at camouflaging the purpose of the series. This no-nonsense approach would probably appeal more to the high ability student than to the low. The guidebook suggestion to begin students one level below their current reading grade might help to deal with this.

Much has been done in both the tapes and the lesson books to enable the student to work independently with the program. A "key word" or dictionary section, provided with the story in each lesson, is one example.

The teacher needs to insure that each child begins at the appropriate level, is oriented to the program, and has the required skills to handle the reading involved. Some dictionary skills are required in order to make use of the "key words" section.

The suggested followup activities should help the child to apply the skills learned.

HOW TO STUDY AND WHY

American Recording Society, 100 Ave. of the Americans, New York 10013

Level: Elementary and secondary grades

Price: Approximately $10.00

According to the Publishers:

This is a set of two records written for students, narrated by Jerry Vandeventer, and written by Bernice McCullar, Director of Information, Georgia State Department of Education. Information is provided in a variety of study skill areas.

Content:

The records consist of 10 lectures followed by practice activities designed to motivate the development of better study habits. They are suggested for use with the age group 8-18. The topics covered are:

1. Why One Should Study
2. How to Listen
3. How to do Homework
4. How to Take Notes
5. How to Speak Better
6. How to Write Clearly
7. How to Read More
8. How to Get Better Marks on Exams
9. How to Handle Grown Ups
10. How to Become More Self-Confident

Evaluation:

The lectures contain excellent advice. However, I suspect that the listener who is unmotivated would consider them simply some more of the same kind of advice he receives constantly from parents, teachers, and ministers. I think that this kind of lecture would be tuned out by most students. It is like unpalatable food that we know we should eat, but it tastes bad, so we don't.

For the student of any age who is open for suggestions and is keen to find out ways to succeed in studies, the records consolidate a wealth of excelllent suggestions. However, I think that some of the writer's ideas are debatable. Some may have applied a generation ago but are outdated now. For example, the statement that a good education insures a high salary is disproved in industry where the foreman receives more pay than the engineer, to mention only one of many examples.

The guide which is printed on the record jacket does suggest that group discussion of the ideas presented would be a useful follow-up activity. This suggestion, in my estimation, is a *must* if students are to get anything out of the records. One group that might profit by using the record without follow-up is older students who are oriented towards authoritative teaching and who are anxious to succeed. However, even even this group would probably do better with a more stimulating approach.

The format includes, in nearly every lesson, a listing of points to remember. These are numbered. I feel that the points would be remembered better if a variety of "gimmicks", such as mnemonic devices, were used instead of numbers. For example, a set of six points in the listening section might be remembered better if key words were used in each statement whose initial letters were *L, I, S, T, E, N.* Rhymes are used minimally. These could have been put to more frequent use. Even short songs, suitable for the age group, might have added variety. The monotony of the same voice enumerating points could also have been relieved by the use of another voice, perhaps that of a woman or a younger person, or both.

Some good rhymes, poems, and quotations are used. These add interest and aid memory. Unfortunately, however, the reaction from my seventeen year old daughter was: "It's dead."

EFFECTIVE LISTENING

Sales Service Department, Xerox Corporation, 600 Madison Avenue, New York 10022

Level: Adult

Editor's Note:

This is a three-hour programmed instructional course in listening. These taped materials are very expensive. However, the course can be taken at the University of Calgary. For further information, contact the Division of Continuing Education, University of Calgary.

Content:

This is a listening training program designed for use in business and industry. It

takes the form of taped, spoken statements which are listened to and then summarized by the learner. The summary is sometimes oral and sometimes written, and generally includes the speaker's main point and supporting remarks. The training includes exposure to the kinds of speakers one is often required to listen to, and learning to extract the speaker's meaning in spite of complexity or poor organization of the statement. The program also teaches the ability to get meaning in spite of such distracting elements as accents, emotions, background noises and colorful asides.

The program is organized in such a way that gradual practice reinforces the learning. Statements become increasingly difficult and lengthy as the program progresses. Because these increases are gradual, the student remains confident in his ability to cope with them and makes progress.

According to the publishers, by the end of the program the student should be able to "organize lengthy conversational material into meaningful and useful information." An article entitled *Listening to People* provides motivation for the program and is used as an introduction to it.

A group of primary pupils at Calgary's University Elementary School use taped materials at a listening table.

Evaluation of the Program As An Instrument for Teachers:

I see four important values for teachers:

1. Effective listening ability enables the teacher to understand the interests, needs, and problems of his students.
2. Effective listening ability should be taught so that students may derive maximum benefit from immediate learning situations as well as skills which will be invaluable in adult life.
3. This program in effective listening provides the teacher with skills necessary for getting the most out of courses, conferences, and other communication.
4. The program provides the teacher with reasons and techniques for using more flexible methods in the classroom.

To expand on these four points: the introduction to the program and the program itself make clear the importance of listening as a tool for the person in a position of leadership. Listening to pupils gives the teacher an insight into their interests, needs, and problems. Many teachers do not listen to their pupils, having the idea that the role of the teacher is to speak and the role of the children is to listen. Nichols and Stevens, in the introduction to this program state, " . . . too many superiors - although they announce that their doors are always open - fail to listen; and their subordinates, in face of failure, do not feel free to say what they want to say. As a result, subordinates withdraw from their superiors more and more. They fail to talk about important problems that should be aired for both parties' benefit. When such problems remain unaired, they often turn into unrealistic monsters that come back to plague the superior who failed to listen."

This applies very specifically to teachers. Dewey's "educative experience" begins with the interests of the child. One could site many educational philosophers and psychologists who would agree that reaching the child's interest is basic to the learning experience. Therefore, unless the teacher can find some way of discovering the child's interests, the teaching is largely ineffective before it starts. Listening to the child is one way, perhaps the best way, to discover the child's interests, for the effective listener can receive ideas from a dialogue with another, often in spite of the speaker's means of expressing himself, the presence of background noise, or other distractions.

The teacher may insist that time does not permit listening effectively to each of 35 youngsters every day. The five and one-half hours of the school day already have too many demands. If this time were divided among pupils for listening to each one individually, it would allow less than ten minutes for each child, with no time left for classroom instruction. The reply has to be that, if the teacher "teaches" (or speaks) for five and one-half hours a day, and nobody listens, what has been accomplished? Of course this is the extreme case, but the fact remains that the important consideration is not how much time the teacher has spent in teaching but how much time the students have been engaged in the kind of listening that leads to learning. Perhaps one solution to this problem lies in arranging for more activity periods during which the teacher can move about among groups and talk with individuals. During this time, the teacher's *listening* to the student should be the major concern.

Teaching the skills of effective listening is often neglected in the classroom. Saying, "Now listen carefully" is about all we now do to insure that the student *is* listening to what we are teaching. Listening training can improve ability to understand the spoken word by as much as 25%. The value of this training in the student's life both in and out of school is enormous because he spends and will continue to spend at least 45% of his communication

time in listening. The research suggests that children, subjected to so much verbal instruction from adults, are required to listen much more than 45% of the time.

The third point involves the teacher's ability to comprehend and interpret the large amount of instruction she herself receives from courses, communication with administrators and supervisors, and at conferences and conventions. Effective listening can increase the value of all these elements which are devised to improve teaching competence. To increase the amount of knowledge the teacher takes back to the classroom without increasing the amount of time she spends in obtaining it seems like a very worthy goal.

The Xerox program of *Effective Listening* has a great deal to offer the teacher. The article which introduces the program in and of itself serves as an inspiration to become more aware of what people are saying (and for us this means our students, among others). The program, although designed for business and industry, would probably be effective without changes for the teacher. In fact there may be a distinct advantage in presenting it in its present form to teachers. I believe that the school is all too often isolated from the community and the teacher goes along teaching the way it has been done for years, mainly because she does not know what the needs of the community are. She has little contact with the world of business and industry, for which she is supposed to be preparing her students for any role in the adult world. This program, as it is, can awaken the teacher to the needs of the student if he enters the world of business or industry.

However, I can also see a need for an additional tape designed especially for teachers in which the voices are those of children and the subjects presented are subjects of interest to children. Such an addition to the program could be a valuable instrument both for the practicing teacher and the neophyte. ●